The Boogeyman: Fear of the Unknown

By. Joshua D. Glawson

Throughout the vast majority of the world and all of recorded history, there have been tales of boogeymen, monsters in the dark to punish the disobedient and the susceptible. **The Boogeyman** goes by various names with male, female, or neutral gender- Bogieman, El Coco, Sack Man, Ou-Wu, Babayka, El Ogro, The Devil, etc. The origins of such stories are mostly unknown, as if they are a part of human nature and a mechanism for control or protection. Most of the time, the boogeyman is used as a threat by adults to vulnerable children who may or may not be misbehaving, going to risky areas, playing in the dark or night, etc. The character is said to eat children, carries children away to a hell-like place, holds children hostage, scares children enough to correct the child's portrayed bad behavior, and other myths will suggest something similar to these. Overall, the boogeyman is unfortunately a socially approved terrorizing mechanism that plagues the mind with fear of the unknown evoking more flight than fight, since the monster is presented too strong to fight off if not invincible altogether.

When we were children, we usually heard of such a beast in the dark, under our bed, in the closet, behind the closed shower curtain, in the basement, outside at night, in the forest, in that area we were told not to go, etc. In each of these cases, it was most likely told by an adult, or another adult scared another child enough that this scared child informed us of the

invisible, always lurking, demon. In some cultures, a protective guardian angel of sorts, is presented as a savior of innocent children who are deemed as being good. This invisible protector is all that can immediately protect a child from the bad one out to get them.

Since we have been adults, the boogeyman may still come to mind in places we deem as dangerous, in dark places, after death especially for those that are *bad,* and in certain unknown potential future events. When many adults think of robots, artificial intelligence, etc., they also think of the boogeyman, but in a different form. With super intelligent computers constantly being worked on by scientists around the world, many people will interject the idea that these unknown machines will become demonized and seek to enslave or destroy humans and the world. In the case of robots conquering the world, it is nothing more than a **Nietzschean *Übermensch***, or Superman, that all aspire to become, but none can. This super demon then begins to wipe the world clean of all humans or enslaves them for its own gains. Similarly to that of the *Übermensch,* we find the boogeyman again in space exploration with the idea that evil aliens are waiting for their moment to kill off the human race or, again, enslave us.

In both of these cases of the fear of ill-willed super computers or predacious aliens, the fear of an unrealized boogeyman limits success and progress; and in doing so, many people will turn towards religion and government as a way to protect us from the possibility of a monster in the

darkness of the unknown. These organizations are presented as the fairy godmothers that will protect our soul, body, and future with regulations, limitations, and giving someone else the control who knows better than we do when it comes to knowing what is right from what is wrong. Religion can become a government, and the blind allegiance to government can become a religion of its own known as *Statism*. **Statism** is the belief that a government should control almost every part of everyone's life in order to prevent deterioration of society, corruption, losses, heinous crimes, terrorism, disease, poverty, bullies, dominant groups, **Hobbesian** regression to the turmoil and chaos of human nature, and so forth. The ideology of Statism declares that every aspect of one's life and being is to be guided within the limitations set forth by the government, arbitrarily or not. In fact, Statists, i.e. the followers of the religion Statism, have manufactured boogeymen of their own throughout history and around the globe in the warrantless hunt for those not Christian or Catholic, those not Muslim, witches, spies, Communists, Socialists, terrorists, drug dealers or users, immigrants (illegal and not), capitalists, educated, war on poverty, etc.

Statism has also provided the fear of Liberty, the fear of not having a central government, the fear of no government at all, etc. all portrayed in the images of utter chaos combined with the threat of a power vacuum or void. **A power vacuum, or power void**, is the idea that without one government, other governments will take over or arise, with more terror,

control, purges, and/or evil than anything like the government currently in control. This proposed boogeyman is said to appear when the coercive control of the few, i.e. government, is removed, leaving the helpless and *hapless* people vulnerable to this invisible monster. The devout followers of the State will use this boogeyman as a form of mental terrorism that instills fear into the minds of the susceptible and impressionable. They propose that the only guardian against such a boogeyman is that of the omnibenevolent, omniscient, and possibly near-omnipotent government that staves off the evil, lurking, monsters in the unknown darkness. The closer people move towards Liberty or freedom, Statists will pontificate this fear of the boogeyman into the hearts and minds of all that listen. As the fears build within society, Statists require more and more control, policing, laws, regulations, spying on everyone, recordkeeping of all actions, and more funding through taxes.

This is because as time moves forward, the boogeyman, or *Übermensch*, is always growing, always stronger, and always more cunning than its potential victims. It is like the nightmare in which you are forever running away from the unstoppable monster. In Statism, this ever- and all-pervasive boogeyman begins as a child's common fear of the unknown and relatively quickly becomes a psychological defect leading to the actual embodiment of a boogeyman found in the actualized monster of an oppressive government born from the vary ideas supposedly contested. This idea that such a boogeyman exists slows and/or prevents human progress.

If anything, not teaching our children of such monsters as a boogeyman, not scaring them in the dark or around corners, while encouraging them to learn about what makes us scared or fearful, can help them understand the world in a much more realistic manner. It will teach them to be less afraid of the unknowns in our lives, while simultaneously teaching them to pursue difficulties rather than retreat when brought to a point of otherwise unknown circumstances or subjects. These constant fears of boogeymen do not need to exist when it comes to peaceful, free, and voluntary action, as these unsubstantiated worries of boogeymen instill fear of the general unknown, inhibit actions, and bog down growth.

Furthermore, the fear of such boogeymen inebriates the infected individual's will to better their own life, progress, and success, leaving them timid and unsure how to guide their own life. This removal of the individual's capability to properly lead their own life also restricts their moral gauge, furthering their dependence on the guardian in control, while making them more susceptible to relativism, subjectivism, and nihilism. In response to their fears of boogeymen, many will not only embrace religion and government, but they may also cling to collectivism to help combat the invisible boogeyman. This is because they believe their particular group *should* survive, and perhaps their group knows how to best fight off the boogeyman better than others'.

If the fear of the unknown, and the mental process of transforming this fear into a monstrous anthropomorphized being is a **natural process**, then it is through Reason, learning, experience, understanding, peaceful and voluntary exchange, and individual Liberty that we are able to rid ourselves and our children of such an invasive and deplorable thought that acts as a threat to our own well-being and/or progress. This, is a way to become stronger than the fictional beast that myths and Statists have pressed upon us. This is a way we become our own heroes, in a world that we as humans are the biggest hindrance and threat to our own betterment.

"Beware that, when fighting monsters, you yourself do not become a monster... for when you gaze long into the abyss. The abyss gazes also into you." – **Friedrich Nietzsche**.